

Keep Wildlife Healthy & Wild - Please Don't Feed Them!

The City of Huntsville Animal Services has received more citizen inquiries about wildlife, particularly coyotes in Cummings Research Park. Urban wildlife, consisting of raccoon, skunks, deer, birds, foxes, coyotes and many more species, is a natural phenomenon in our civilized world. The beauty of observing wildlife can become an unfortunate temptation for some individuals. Observing urban wildlife often leads well-meaning individuals to intentionally feed these creatures; therefore, dramatically and unnaturally increasing their population.

Unfortunately, feeding urban wildlife has particular negative consequences including:

- Creating a nuisance by increasing the abundance of certain wildlife species in a concentrated area
- Accelerating the spread of wildlife diseases due to congregation of these animals
- Development of unnatural behavioral patterns and loss of suspicion and fear of humans
- Non-nutritious, yet the most common fed, foods interfere with wildlife physical growth and development
- Increased number of wildlife seeking handouts killed by cars
- Public concerns created mainly of foxes and coyotes who have lost their natural fear and avoidance of humans
- Dangerous human/wildlife interaction when humans attempt to pet or handle wildlife
- Wildlife losing their ability to forage for food
- Wildlife who are fed can become easy targets for predators

If you want to help wildlife these following tips are beneficial.

- Provide natural sources of food by planting native flowers and trees
- Provide a source of water when natural sources are frozen
- Share information about the negative consequences of feeding urban wildlife
- Don't unintentionally feed urban wildlife by leaving bowls of dog and cat food outside
- Respect the dignity of urban wildlife by keeping them wild

Fox and Coyote Facts

- Urban foxes and coyotes often stop and stare at humans, this is not a sign of a pending attack
- Urban coyotes rarely have physical contact with humans
- Pet dogs bite 4.7 million Americans/year and kill between 15 – 30 Americans/year, coyotes bit less than 50 Americans/year and in reported history only one American death has been caused by a coyote (neighborhood, long-term fed California coyote)
- Foxes and coyotes may attack and kill free-roaming cats
- If a fox or coyote stares at you, yell, scream, throw something attempting to frighten it